



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

CONCEPT NOTE

HIGH LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE ON DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN AFRICA

Theme: Impact of the Data Revolution on Development Planning in Africa

Dates: 7-8 July 2015

Venue: Cotonou, Benin

Capacity Development Division (CDD)

In collaboration with the African Centre for Statistics (ACS)

1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE OF THE HIGH LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE

Remarkable economic progress has been made in Africa since the early 2000. Economic estimates for Africa for 2014 and 2015 project an average growth rate of 5.8 and 6% respectively, making the continent one of the fastest growing regions in the world. According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), in 2013, African economies grew an average of 4%, and in rapidly growing regions like East and West Africa, the growth rate was 6%, well above the global level of 3%.¹ These remarkable growth rates are in line with the continent's performance over the last decade, and can be attributed largely to improved macroeconomic and political governance, successful business policy reforms, increased domestic demand, and high commodity prices.

While there is good reason to be optimistic about the continent's future, important challenges remain. A major issue facing policy makers in Africa is that of the sustainability of the growth performance; second, the diversification of the economy away from primary products towards manufacturing remains a strong concern for African policy-makers in light of the structural transformation agenda; third is the issue of inclusive growth, so as to not marginalize important segments of the population, including women and the youth. Another challenge regards the environmental impact of this growth performance in the long run, including its effect on climate change.

Addressing these and other important challenges requires careful planning on the part of States, as they put in place policies to affect economic growth, and reduce poverty through employment creation, and this, through the structural transformation of their economies. Historically, structural transformation has required an active State, and capable institutions that have the ability to set a strategic vision for their national development, and the capacities to plan for pathways to reach that vision.

Furthermore, it is important to note that to achieve the development planning goals of sustainable and employment-generating economic growth through structural transformation, will require evidence-based and data-driven policy-making approach, which relies on building and integrating credible data into the planning process, with specific milestones and targets that can be verified, measured, and monitored.

The ability to generate, collect, manage, and analyze its own data is necessary for the success of development planning in Africa. The continent needs to build strong statistical systems which would serve as a platform for realistically identifying those national and continental development indicators required to guide the social and economic development efforts. This is also necessary for the pursuit of the region's development objectives and goals as laid out in the Common African Position (CAP) on the post-2015 agenda, and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063. The overall

¹African Development Bank (2014). *African Economic Outlook 2014: Global Value Chains and Africa's Industrialization*. Tunis, Tunisia: AfDB.

goal is to ensure that Africa owns, plans, manages, and ultimately funds its own development. Accomplishing this requires greater ownership, at the national level, by African Development Planners and proper allocation and targeting of resources to make informed choices. And this cannot be achieved today without a strong involvement of Africa in the Data Revolution.

The concept of the data revolution was emphasized and expounded upon in previous reports that culminated in the UN Secretary General's Synthesis Report. The latter recommends that a comprehensive programme of action on data should be established under the UN Statistical Commission, which would include "*the building of a global consensus, applicable principles and standards for data, a web of data innovation networks to advance innovation and analysis, a new innovative financing stream to support national data capacities, and a global data partnership to promote leadership and governance*"².

Similarly, at their 23rd Ordinary Session of the African Union held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in June 2014, African Heads of State and Governments instructed the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and United Development Programme (UNDP) to organize a High Level Conference to discuss the Data Revolution in Africa and its implications for the AU Agenda 2063 and the post-2015 development agenda. This High Level Conference was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 27 to 29 March 2015, culminating in the *Africa Data Consensus*, which defines the data revolution in terms of its main purpose: "a shift in the way that data is harnessed to impact on development decision-making, with a particular emphasis on building a culture of usage."³

The challenge for the continental institutions and African policy-makers remains how to integrate the recommendations of the *Africa Data Consensus* into countries' national planning processes. It is in this context that the Capacity Development Division (CDD) of ECA, in collaboration with the African Centre for Statistics (ACS), has organized this High Level Policy Dialogue. The theme of the meeting is: "***The Impact of the Data Revolution on Development Planning in Africa***", and it will assemble Senior Planning Officials from all 54 African countries. The meeting will be held in Cotonou, Benin on 7-8 July 2015.

2. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY DIALOGUE

It is in the recognition of the necessity of promoting coordination and coherence among African planners that ECA decided to facilitate a series of High Level Leadership Policy Dialogues of African Planners and Chief Executives of planning bodies in Africa. The current High Level Policy Dialogue is the third of such Policy Dialogues, which began in 2014. The first was held in

²United Nations (2014b) *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet: Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda*.

³ECA (2015), *Africa Data Consensus*. Addis Ababa: ECA, AUC, AfDB and UNDP

Johannesburg in March 2014, and focused on “*Enhancing Coordination between the NEPAD Planning Agency and National Planning Bodies of African Countries*”. The second was held in Kigali in September 2014, with the theme: “*The Process, Substance and Key Goals of the AU Agenda 2063*”.

The objective of the current High Level Policy Dialogue is threefold:

- One, it will provide an opportunity for African Planners and Chief Executives of planning bodies to discuss and identify the strategies, instruments, and mechanisms that can be adopted by member States to promote evidence-based decision-making, through the integration of the recommendations of the Africa Data Consensus in national planning processes.
- The second objective of the Policy Dialogue is to provide a forum for participants to share knowledge on the policy implications of the Data Revolution to national planning, and ultimately, the structural transformation agenda.
- The third objective is to provide a platform for African Planners and Chief Executives of planning bodies to harmonize and coordinate their actions as they move forward with the integration of the Africa Data Consensus in national planning processes.

3. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

At the conclusion of this High Level Policy Dialogue, it is expected that:

- African Development Planners from all 54 African countries are informed, aware and do share a common understanding of the *Africa Data Consensus* as a tool to maximize the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the Data Revolution in the overall framework of development planning;
- National Development Planners from all 54 African countries make clear recommendations on:
 - Structural and programmatic integration of the Data Revolution to drive, add considerable value to, and radically transform existing development planning initiatives according to well-defined targets and milestones at the continental, sub-regional and national levels;
 - Establishment of a “community of practice” of development planners (interacting with policy-makers, partners and stakeholders) to collectively share experiences and learning on the integration of the data revolution on national planning;
 - Identifying different alternative means of promoting coordination and coherence for efficient implementation of the Data Revolution in development planning in Africa.

4. PARTICIPANTS

This High Level Policy Dialogue will bring together African Planning Director Generals, as well as RECs, AfDB, UNDP, NEPAD and AU officials. Development partners

interested in the data revolution will be invited to participate. Participants may also include the private sector and civil society.

5. DATE AND VENUE

The meeting will be held in Cotonou, Benin on 7 - 8 July 2015.

6. CONTACTS

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